



CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
JUNE 24, 2014
7 P.M.

Charter Revision

The Charter Revision Commission meeting was held in the Conference Room A at the Board of Education Administration Building, Hunting Hill Avenue on Tuesday, June 24 at 7 p.m.

Present

David Larson, Chair, Domenique Thornton, Robert Blanchard, Michael Gaudino, Kathryn Adams, Daniel Ryan, Anton Petras and staff Clerk Marie Norwood.

Absent

Thomas Hutton, Joseph Milardo,, Philip Pessina, and Vincent Loffredo.

Also Present

One member of the public.

Called to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Minutes Approved

The Chair asks for a motion on the minutes. Commissioner Gaudino moves the minutes of June 17, 2014 for approval; his motion is seconded by Commissioner Petras. The Chair states there is one minor change, Page 2 under review of Common Council Resolution, the word budget needs a t. He calls for the vote and it is unanimous to approve by the members present.

Public Hearing Opens

No one comes forward to address the Commission.

Public Hearing Closes

The chair closes the public hearing.

Public comment – no one is present

Review of information received.

The Chair starts the meeting reviewing information on bonding that was requested. From 2009 – 2013, there were 64 bond votes; of them 3 were amended with 2 up and one down. He states 33 were at or below \$500,000; threshold changed to \$750,000 and there were 24 below and 7 went to referendum. There were none between \$750,000 and \$1 million.

Government Structure of towns.

The Chair reads from the list of towns they agreed to compare with Middletown and they are similar to our structure. There is no city manager for any of these and these are what we were looking at for salary. Comm. Gaudino this is salary discussion, we wanted to look at \$100,000 and the mayor is making that. His total compensation, benefit package, and car; he would like to see what his real compensation package is. There is a lot of money involved. Chair Larson states every city employee gets health

benefits and it costs \$15,000. Comm. Gaudino would like the total package amount. The chair responds the salary is \$85,000, family medical package is \$12,000. Comm. Gaudino states when he was on the efficiency in government and they were telling me because of previous contractual obligations, it is 90%. It costs the tax payer \$190,000 per employee. The Commission thinks that is not correct. Comm. Thornton states they had to declare personal miles in their income. Chair Larson states the salary is \$85,000; \$12,000 for medical; and \$8,000 for the car. That is about \$105,000. Comm. Gaudino states they have tablets and can have their own hot spot and that is a perk. Comm. Thornton states you are always available. These devices help them in the job. The chair states the total package is between \$105,000 and \$110,000. The Commission is directed to look at the pension information on the towns they selected and review the list. Basically they have a pension plan for the mayor; in Middletown, if the mayor doesn't do ten years, he is not eligible for the pension. Chair Larson states if you have a 457 and 401K plan, then it is yours. Larson states there is no social security. Comm. Gaudino asks are they two or four year terms. Comm. Blanchard states most are two. They review the list of 4 year terms for mayors.

Chair Larson states he would not mix four year terms with salary. He called Vin Loffredo to touch base with the City Attorney about what he is looking for relative to the Middletown Fire Department and he will do that and Brig will draw up language and we would have something to consider. At our next meeting we can address it.

Chair Larson moves to the next item; he states the language changing it to the four year term and in the current language the office of mayor for a two year term if the office is vacated in the first 18 months then it is an election; if only six months left, it is the deputy mayor. We have to consider with our four year term if we want to play with the 18 months. We can change it to six months so if the mayor does vacate the position, more than six months, it is a special election or we can go to the 75% idea that if he vacates during the first 3 years, then a special election. I think we should keep it for the first 3 years, a special election, but one year left, it would be the deputy mayor. Comm. Ryan asks Middletown has election every two years so I don't think we have to wait three years. Larson states if the mayor vacates from day one to just before the last year, there would be a special election. The last year would be the deputy mayor. Comm. Ryan states if the mayor is elected and resigned early, then we need an election. Chair Larson if a mayor resigns Jan. 2 of the fourth year, then you bring it to the next election. Comm. Ryan states the election would not be a special election but with the upcoming two year election. Comm. Petras states what happens if he resigns January 1 the first year, it would be almost two years. Comm. Ryan asks how often it happens.

Comm. Blanchard moves that if a vacancy in the office of the mayor occurs within the first three years, 36 months, there is a special election and if he resigns in the last 12 months, the Deputy Mayor will take his place. Comm. Gaudino seconds the motion. Comm. Adams asks if there is a down side. Comm. Blanchard responds this gives people the chance to select a new mayor if the mayor leaves early. Chair Larson states when Seb stepped down to become tax collector, it was at the six month mark.

There is no further discussion. The Chair calls for the vote and it is unanimous to approve the change with six aye votes.

Chair Larson notices Councilwoman Kleckowski entering the room and states they had public input, but if you would like to address the Commission, you may. She declines.

Information from General Counsel.

Chair Larson states they have received the language changes from the City Attorney. He reads through the changes that have been reviewed by General Counsel and asks for a motion to approve the proposed language. Comm. Adams so moves and is seconded by Comm. Ryan. Comm. Gaudino asks if it is the four year section. For me to vote on this I would have to have the term limits. Chair Larson responds we are waiting for Brig's opinion; term limits would be separate.

The Commission votes unanimously with six aye votes to approve the language changes.

List of items:

Term limits for Mayor waiting for opinion.

Salary for the Mayor

Chair Larson states currently it is \$85,000 and it was suggested the salary be put at \$100,000 and \$110,000 with an annual CPI cost of living and since no pension and social security we would talk about \$15,000 tax shelter annuity that they can take with them. Is there a motion?

Comm. Petras states leave it at \$100,000 plus CPI plus 15% annuity. Comm. Larson states the salary and CPI is paid by the city and city would contribute \$15,000 tax shelter plan; the mayor could put in an addition \$5,000 if he wishes. Comm. Petras moves it for approval and is seconded by Comm. Adams. Comm. Gaudino states give him a \$15,000 match. Comm. Larson states it is a tax shelter annuity. If he paid Social Security the city would have to match at 7-1/4%; the City puts 6 % in for pension and what they get back is what they put in. The understanding is the mayor would not be eligible for the pension.

Comm. Ryan asks for clarification of the motion; the chair responds it would be present benefits except pension contributions. Comm. Ryan points out that the other cities gave us figures that did not include the benefits. Comm. Gaudino states it is still a benefit. Comm. Adams disagrees because they are tools to continue working outside the business hours. Comm. Ryan they are not included in the other salaries. Comm. Gaudino we don't know what they get. Comm. Thornton asks for clarification; would someone care to express for me why the mayor would not be in the pension system. Chair Larson responds the mayor would get something for retirement because they won't make it to ten years for the pension. Chair Larson states the motion is recommending starting July 1, 2015 \$100,000 for salary and an annual increase of CPI, and there would be \$15,000 annuity each year provided by the city and the mayor would not participate in Social Security or the city pension system.

The Chair states they will ask Brig for clarification for the Mayor to not be in the pension. The vote on the motion is called. It is unanimous with six aye votes and the understanding Brig is looking at the motion.

Raise for Council

Chair Larson asks if the Commission is willing to consider a raise for the council members by \$100 a month and leadership is an additional \$50 a month for deputy mayor, majority leader, and minority leader. Comm. Petras asks how much do you pay the Board of Ed. The Clerk responds the Board members cannot be paid per state statute. Comm. Thornton states they should be paid a percentage of the Mayor's salary and then it would rise with the Mayor's. Comm. Adams asks why not give them CPI on what they are earning. Comm. Thornton asks why not use some combination of what the unions and teamsters were getting that would be more equitable. Comm. Gaudino states they have tablets. Comm. Ryan states what are the other perks. Comm. Gaudino states the hotspot, free parking, a do not parking list. Comm. Blanchard asks how many hours are dedicated to committee meetings. Councilwoman Kleckowski states she sits on five committees; it is not equitable between the Democrats and Republicans because there are more democrats on the Council. It costs money going back and forth. We attend all the other things.

Chair Larson asks if there is a motion to do anything. Comm. Adams moves an increase as the Chair suggested. Go to \$7,200 and the majority leader minority leader and deputy mayor a stipend per month. Comm. Gaudino states running for office that is their choice. Councilwoman Kleckowski states the Chairs of committees do extra work and she would be careful on a stipend for the leaders.

Comm. Adams moves for a \$100 increase per month for the Council and her motion is seconded by Comm. Blanchard. Comm. Gaudino states with a 5 mill tax increase, what are we doing. Chair Larson if we go with \$100 a month that is \$14,400; for the mayor, it is \$30,000 if you include the TSA. Comm. Thornton states they should have a cola compared to unions. CPI is not sufficient. The Clerk points out that exempt employees get COLA based on CPI on the December of the previous year. Chair Larson states the Council votes on their salary increase and it could be perceived as a conflict. Comm. Gaudino states he will not support this on top of a 5 mill increase in taxes. He hopes everyone here would not support it. Chair Larson states the increase is due to reval. Comm. Gaudino replies he has heard this,

but they knew for years reval would happen and they still spent money. It was the spending that caused the 5 mill increase.

Comm. Ryan calls the question. Chair Larson states it is putting in a \$100 a month increase for the Council to \$8,400 per year to be in the Charter. Commissioners Adams, Blanchard, Thornton, and Ryan vote yes and Commissioners Petras and Gaudino vote no. The Chair states the motion is approved.

CPI for Council

Comm. Thornton asks should there be some type of increase to take it out of the political arena and the Council works very hard. Chair Larson asks if they would you be comfortable with what the mayor and directors receive. Comm. Thornton moves for a yearly increase based on the CPI increase and Comm. Adams seconds the motion. Comm. Ryan states CPI excludes many things. Vote called. Adams

The Chair calls for the vote. It is three aye votes by Commissioners Adams, Ryan, and Thornton and three nay votes by Commissioners Blanchard, Petras, and Gaudino. The Chair votes aye to break the tie and states the motion carries.

Compensation for Council Leadership

Comm. Thornton moves for compensation for the leadership of the Council - deputy mayor, majority leader and minority leader. It should be an extra \$50 a month. There is no second. The Chair states the motion dies for lack of a second.

Fire District

Chair Larson states we will wait to hear from Vin regarding the Fire District.

Staggered terms for the council.

Chair Larson states we are waiting on the opinion to discuss staggered terms.

Terms of Council Members

Comm. Blanchard states on the terms of the Council, he would like to discuss. Chair Larson states he will entertain a motion for council terms. Comm. Ryan moves the term from two to four years; Comm. Thornton seconds the motion.

Comm. Petras states he can't support that. Staying at two years it gives the voters an opportunity to make changes if they don't like what is going on. Comm. Blanchard states he will support it on the contingent that we make the elections the same for Planning and Zoning and Board of Ed and Council. You won't get the voters out for off year elections. So that every four years it should be four years. Comm. Blanchard would support elections every four years with that caveat. Chair Larson asks that we vote on this and we can revisit and Marie bring us what other elected offices we have. Comm. Thornton states it makes more sense to have them run at the same time and save money on elections. Chair Larson states we would have to have all city offices for 4 years. Comm. Adams states if staggered terms, they do need to keep minority representation. Chair Larson lets deal with the Council with a four-year term and at our next meeting all the city elected officials and look at that. Chair Larson then we would have to recommend 4 years and no staggered terms.

Comm. Ryan states having been corporation counsel for at least 12 years and he has seen Council members come and go; I frankly think it takes at least two years to know what you are doing. Comm. Petras replies if it takes two years, you don't belong there. Councilwoman Kleckowski responds there is a learning curve. Comm. Ryan thinks it would lead to better representation by Councilors. They won't worry about learning the ropes one year and planning an election run the next. Comm. Gaudino states he will not support it for the council. If we move the mayor to four years we are already taking it from the voters and the council would be their only other body to go to and if you go to four years for them, then you can't counteract what the mayor is doing. Chair Larson states the preponderance of mayors has been four years or more in office. And the same with the City Council members. Comm. Gaudino states

term limits will bring in new blood. Comm. Blanchard asks what happens if a city council member resigns; Councilwoman Kleckowski responds the party brings forward the name of the replacement.

Comm. Adams agrees with Comm. Ryan regarding stability for government, better candidates. It would lead to a better quality candidate and council member having the time to learn the job. I do believe it is important; not everyone is in the know and she doesn't want to limit the candidates. Councilwoman Kleckowski states the majority of people on the Council have jobs and many are working full time and unlike Hartford. You have to run 18 months after you get on. It is expensive. Comm. Petras asks Comm. Adams about her remark that a two year term candidate is of less quality than a four year candidate. Comm. Adams states it was the quality of service; the person will be able to serve to give a better quality of service. She is looking at this with the perspective of a teacher. It takes 3 years to learn the job and we would get a more effective council person. Comm. Gaudino states you would get less wanting to make a four year commitment. Comm. Adams states you will get more serious people.

Chair Larson calls the vote. The motion is recommending four-year terms for the Council members. It is four aye votes by Commissioners Adams, Blanchard, Ryan and Thornton; and two nay votes by Commissioners Gaudino and Petras.

Chair Larson states we covered what we need to do. He will ask Brig to give us language for the balance of this deal with Vin and city offices and staggered terms. One more general conversation and after that tuti fini.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 8.

Motion to Adjourn

Comm. Blanchard moves to adjourn, seconded by Comm. Gaudino. The vote is unanimous. The Chair adjourns the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Attest:

Marie O. Norwood
Staff